

the regime. Legalizing drugs is not the answer. Instead, we must bolster regional security and directly target drug gangs and violent narcotrafickers. America must stand strong against these efforts and in favor of democratic values.

HONORING THE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS OF LONG ISLAND

(Mr. BISHOP of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the courageous volunteer fire departments of Long Island for their skill and dedication in combating the recent outbreaks of wildfires in my district. Once again, they have proved their mettle and won our trust and admiration.

While, thankfully, no lives were lost, the fire, now extinguished, consumed roughly 1,100 acres, destroyed three homes, and damaged or destroyed six other structures, including one commercial building. If not for the actions of our local firefighters, the damage could have been far worse.

We are also fortunate that the three firefighters who were injured fighting the fire are all recovering well.

As a lifelong resident of Suffolk County, I was inspired by the willingness to help shown by the county's fire departments, all 109 of which participated in the effort to combat what turned out to be the seventh-largest fire in Long Island history. Through their combined and coordinated efforts, a larger crisis was averted.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in thanking all of Suffolk County's Fire Departments, as well as our local elected leaders who supervised this operation, for their dedication and exceptional skill in subduing the recent fires.

SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LANDRY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GRAVES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, tonight we're going to have a conversation that I think impacts Americans all across this country, and it's about small businesses, and what has this Congress been doing, what has the President been doing or promoting, and how is it impacting small businesses.

I am going to be joined tonight by some great, great colleagues and champions of small business to talk about what are some of the solutions, what can we be doing here in Washington, not creating more government, not spending more money, but what can we be doing to create an environment that is conducive for business development and for our small business owners.

When I think about the greatness of America, we can list so many items and characteristics of this great Nation, and one of those would have to be small businesses—taking a simple idea in a free market system and taking it to the consumer and growing a business.

And we hear a lot from the administration. They say, businesses are too big. Yet, they need to be smaller. For small businesses, you guys are going too fast, too far. You need to slow down. When, in fact, it should be just the opposite. We should be encouraging small businesses to do more, to grow faster, to invest in their employees.

There is no big business in this Nation that did not first start out as a small business. And I would contend that tonight, Mr. Speaker, that there are small business owners all across this Nation, here even in the eastern time zone, that have yet to have gone home because they're still working. They get up each and every day, putting on their boots, chasing that dream, that idea that they have, and turning it into a business or a concept and chasing that American Dream, to realize that American Dream.

So, to all those small business owners across this great Nation, I want to say thank you. I want to say thank you for your hard work, for pushing against the burdens that come from the Federal Government, the high gas prices, the regulatory environment, this crazy Tax Code that we have, and say don't give up. We are here with you tonight, and we're going to be speaking on your behalf tonight.

I have been joined by some Members from all across this country who are going to talk about small business and concepts that we can be promoting here in Washington to help the small business owner to promote an environment in which small businesses can flourish, not creating more government.

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Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read a letter. I think it's important to share correspondence from our constituents. This comes from Mark, who is in Cumming, Georgia. He says:

Congressman GRAVES, I just wanted to let you know that I am a business owner in Cumming, and I'm tired of all my hard work going to pay taxes which the Federal Government squanders—Federal income tax, State income tax, property tax, sales tax. We are all taxed to death, and apparently, the tax system we have in place now is not working or we wouldn't be so far in debt. So I am strongly in favor of passing the Fair Tax. I believe this system is not only much more equitable, but it eliminates loopholes. It is a much simpler and fairer way to raise revenue. That won't solve the mismanagement of our taxes by government, but at least it will allow us to keep more of the money that we earn. Please vote for it. Thank you.

Mark, I'm happy to tell you, not only will I vote for it, but I'm a cosponsor of it.

Next up to speak on the Fair Tax is the sponsor of the Fair Tax himself,

and that's Congressman WOODALL from the great State of Georgia.

Congressman WOODALL, share with us a little bit about the Fair Tax, about how it impacts small businesses and how it would help them.

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. GRAVES, I appreciate you taking this time tonight.

Folks ask me, What goes on in the evenings there on Capitol Hill? When you finish the votes for the day, what goes on next?

I say, Well, folks are all back in their offices, working, just like small business folks across the country. Just because the customers leave doesn't mean the doors close.

Folks are still working, and this is that time when we get to come down and really fully debate some of these ideas that folks have been watching all day today. We've been talking about transportation policy. We've been talking about Mark Twain a little bit. We've been talking about the rules, the process; but we haven't gotten to talk about small businesses.

When we talk about economic growth in this country—you're from the great State of Georgia, as I am, and we've got some fantastic big companies there. UPS is there, doing fantastic things. They're the folks dressed in brown. Delta Airlines is there, carrying more passengers than anybody else in the country. We've got Coca-Cola there, a brand name that's known the world around. There's Home Depot, the Big Orange, which everybody understands. But that is not where the jobs come from. The jobs come from those small business men and -women who risk everything—everything—to believe that by the sweat of their brows and the power of their ideas they can make their tomorrows better than today.

That letter that you got from your constituent, Mr. GRAVES, is exactly the kind of letter that I get from folks every single day who say, Rob, I don't mind paying the taxes. I understand part of the social contract is that the government has to run, but it doesn't have to be this painful. We can do it in a better way, in H.R. 25, the Fair Tax, of which you are a proud cosponsor, a huge leader on that bill. It is the single most popularly cosponsored piece of fundamental tax reform legislation in either the U.S. House or the U.S. Senate because voters are demanding it one Member of Congress at a time.

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. I thank you for your leadership on that.

I see we've been joined here by the chairman of Rules, the gentleman from California.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for joining us.

Mr. DREIER. I thank my friend for yielding, and I appreciate his yielding.

The reason I've come to the floor is to share with our colleagues the very sad news of the passing of my very close friend Dick Clark, who just within the past couple of hours, it has been reported, has passed away.